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ABSTRACT

This book argues that the Canadian public higher education system should return to the principles of a classical tradition of liberal education, abandoning the experimentation in school curricula and teaching methods of the last three decades. Taking as its point of departure the Ontario government's initiatives concerning destreaming and the "transition years," the book discusses the principles involved in the new curriculum, and discusses the Smith Report (which decried the emphasis on research over teaching at most Canadian universities) and the economic and political pressures, put on the universities, a condition which undermines their educational goals. The incongruity between the new education and the requirements of citizenship in a liberal democracy is the dominant theme of the discussion. Positive aspects of the new pedagogy are considered, but the need for a clear vision of the intellectual and moral purposes of education is described. The aim of the book is to retrieve what is of enduring worth in the Canadian political foundation and its public school system, and to explain why this core is worth defending. Traditional liberal education properly understood is considered democratic in the best sense, contributing to a society which is not deeply divided by race, class and gender. (Individual chapters contain reference notes.) (JPB)

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